in the agriculture sector. Government plans to encourage export of superfine varieties of rice, durum wheat, fresh fruits and vegetables, processed foods, cashew kernels, spices, oilcakes, meat and meat products etc. in a big way. While maximising foreign exchange from the agriculture sector, the strategy of the Government is to allow the export of items of mass consumption in such a manner that it does not compromise with our food security. The introduction of a unified exchange rate, liberalisation made in EXIM Policy 1992—97, lowering of import duties on certain inputs and materials required by the agricultural sector, extension of the benefits available to units under the scheme of Export Oriented United (EOU)/ Export Processing Zones (EPZs), and allowing the exporters of agricultural commodities to sell upto 50% of their produce in the domestic tariff area are all steps intended to improve and enlarge exports of farm products.

Floor price of natural rubber

*309. SHRI M. M. JACOB: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that the price of natural rubber is not commensurate with the cost of cultivation and inputs made by the farmers;

(b) if so, whether Government propose to revise the floor price of the natural rubber produced in this country; and

(c) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL SUPPLIES CONSUMER AFFAIRS & PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION AND MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI KAMALUDDIN AHMED): (a) Government has been periodically announcing the Bench Mark Price for Natural Rubber based on the recommendations of the Cost Accounts Branch of the Finance Ministry who conducts necessary cost study taking into account the increase that takes place from time to time in the cost of various inputs used by the Rubber Growers for cultivation of Natural Rubber. The Bench mark Price thus announced by the Government is considered to be commensurate with the cost cultivation and inputs used by the farmers.

(b) and (c) The Bench Mark Price was announced as recently as February, 1994 @ Rs. 24,900/-per MT for RMA-4 Grade and Rs. 24,400/- per MT for RMA-5 Grade of Natural Rubber based on the recommendations by the Cost Accounts Branch of the Ministry of Finance in February, 1994. Therefore it is too early to revise the Bench Mark Price of Natural Rubber now.

Protest against GATT treaty

*310. SHRI CHIMANBHAI MEHTA:
SHRIMATI RENUKA CHOWDHURY:

Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) what are the points and issues on which opponents raised protest against GATT treaty;

(b) what is the answer of Government to the points ;

(c) whether farmers would have to buy seeds from commercial firms at exorbitant rates;

(d) what is meant by sui-genere system;

(e) whether new plant varieties or developed seeds utilisation on Indian soil would face restrictions; and

(f) if so, the details thereof?